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ABSTRACT

Local and regional advisory councils can provide vocational programs with unique and essential evaluation information. Most advisory councils are asked to review components of vocational programs about which they have limited experience and/or knowledge, such as philosophy, objectives, and management. There are several, often overlooked areas in which the expertise and consequent advice of the advisory council would be most helpful and appropriate. The Kentucky Advisory Committee Evaluation System (KACES) was designed to tap the resource potential of the advisory council. KACES is a four-step evaluation which includes orientation, investigation, interpretation, and recommendation. The evaluation is based on two forms utilized by the advisory councils at the State, regional, and local levels. Reactions to the KACES program were very positive, and recommendations about the KACES program were based on the pilot testing and revisions and include points such as clearly defining the vocational teacher's role in evaluation and developing alternative interviewing times and techniques. (TM)

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THE DEVELOPMENT AND PILOT TESTING OF SELF-REVIEW INSTRUMENTS FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN KENTUCKY

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by

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FOREWORD

We are pleased to present this report to the Kentucky State Advisory Council for Vocational Education and Manpower Development and Training. This report describes the sequence of activities accomplished in developing and trying out the Kentucky Advisory Committee Evaluation System (KACES).

The Center would like to commend Mr. Billy Howard and the Kentucky State Advisory Council for Vocational Education and Manpower Development and Training for initiating a systematic effort to increase the involvement of advisory committees in evaluating vocational programs. Advisory committees are a valuable resource for vocational education. Efforts to use advisory committees' time wisely and their expertise productively are highly commendable.

Special acknowledgements are extended to regional vocational education personnel and advisory committee members in Region II and Region VII of Kentucky who served on the project advisory committee. Participants on the project advisory committee included Mr. Bill Hatley, Mr. John Gray, Mr. Rodney Dempsey, and Mrs. Pat Curtis from Region II and Mr. James Patton, Mrs. Dorothy Corday, Mr. George Graham, Mr. Garry Haake, Mr. Joseph Flynn, Mr. Frank B. Raine, Mr. Don Brandt, and Dr. Dennis Savell from Region VII.

Appreciation is also extended to the local craft committee members, vocational teachers and regional staff who participated in the pilot test of KACES.

Sincere thanks are extended to Dr. N. L. McCaslin who served as project director and to Ms. Kay A. Adams who helped develop and try out the evaluation system. Finally, special recognition is due to Dr. Jerry Walker, Associate Director for Evaluation, for his advice and direction and to Mrs. Marlene Linton and Ms. Mary Schmidt for their efficient typing of the manuscript.

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Introduction

The Kentucky State Advisory Council for Vocational Education and Manpower Development and Training recognized a need to increase the involvement of local and regional advisory committees in evaluating vocational programs. Although advisory councils in most states are asked to evaluate vocational programs, they are rarely given systematic guidance or appropriate tools to use. More frequently, advisory committees are asked to evaluate features of vocational programs that they have limited knowledge about, such as the philosophy. objectives, management and resources of the program. On the other hand, advisory committees are typically not asked to evaluate the features of programs which they are the most qualified to give advice about, such as the relevance of curriculum to current job practices and the quality of students' job-entry and employability skills.

The Kentucky State Advisory Council for Vocational Education and Manpower Development and Training realized that advisory committees were a rich yet not fully tapped resource for vocational education in Kentucky, since they are able to provide advice which is not easily obtainable from any other source. To better tap advisory committees' unique expertise, the State Advisory Council commissioned The Center for Vocational Education to develop an evaluation system which would guide

regional and local advisory committees in their efforts to provide constructive feedback for improving vocational programs.

This report has been prepared to describe the process used in creating, trying out, and revising a set of self-review instruments and guides entitled the Kentucky Advisory Committee Evaluation System (KACES). The remainder of this report presents a description of KACES, description of the development process, and the conclusions and recommendations of the project.

Description of KACES

KACES calls for the participation of local craft committees, regional advisory committees, and the State Advisory Council in the evaluation of local vocational education programs throughout the state of Kentucky. The primary purpose of KACES is to help improve Kentucky's vocational education programs, not to prove whether they are good or bad. A secondary purpose of KACES is to increase advisory committees' knowledge about and involvement in vocational education so that they will be better able to provide advice.

The results of the evaluation will help identify the greatest needs and most outstanding strengths of the vocational programs throughout the state as viewed by advisory committees. It will also provide specific, practical, and meaningful recommendations for making program improvements.

KACES is a four-stage process including orientation, investigation, interpretation, and recommendation. Advisory committees at the local, regional, and state levels will have a different role to play in each stage of the evaluation.

To facilitate involvement across Kentucky, KACES has been divided into sections so that each level of advisory committees (e.g., state, regional and local) will receive the guidance needed for their part in the evaluation. KACES contains seven evaluation guides. These are:

1. Organization Manual
2. Guidelines for the State Advisory Council
3. Procedures for the Regional Advisory Committee
4. Guidelines for the Regional Director of Vocational Education
5. Procedures for the Local Craft Committee
6. Guidelines for the Vocational Teacher
7. Interview Guide

The entire evaluation revolves around two short evaluation instruments which will be completed by advisory committees at the local, regional, and state levels. These instruments are a Profile Form and a Recommendations Form. A one-page Program Profile will provide a visual picture of the features of each local vocational program which most need to be improved. Program Profiles will then be summarized for the region to portray needs at that level. Regional Profiles will, in turn, be summarized to portray the greatest needs for the state of Kentucky. Recommendations and commendations will also be recorded for each local program on a Program Recommendations form. These will then be summarized for each region and then further summarized for the entire state.

Description of the Process

Five steps have been completed in the creation, pilot-test, and revision of KACES. These are:

1. Determine the major areas to be evaluated;
2. Develop preliminary instruments and guides for using them
3. Review and revise the preliminary evaluation system
4. Try out the instruments and guides in two regions of Kentucky
5. Prepare a final version of the KACES instruments and guides.

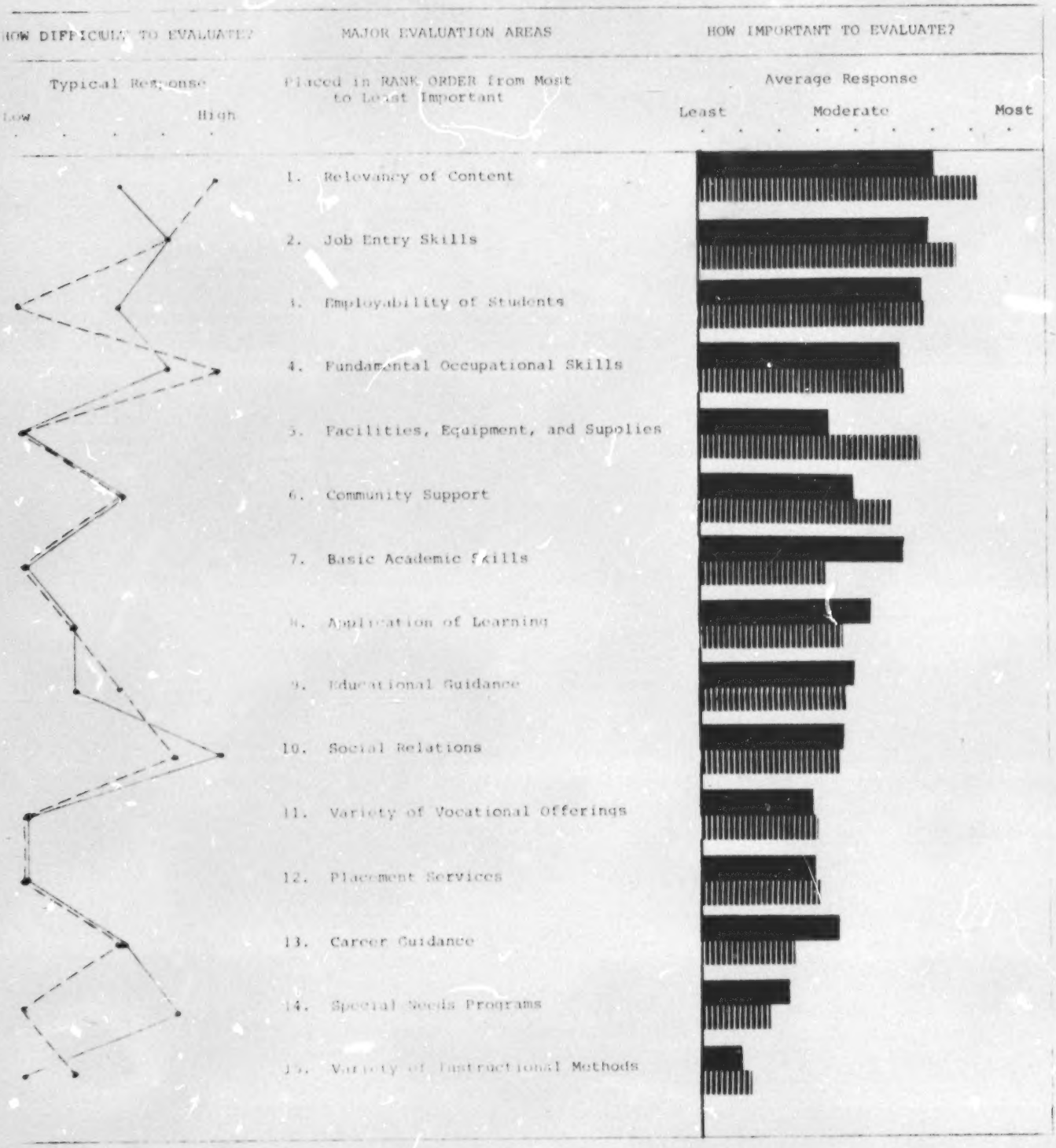
The activities accomplished in each step are described in the following sections.

Determine the Major Areas to be Evaluated

A comprehensive list of evaluation questions were prepared. The questions were shared with several members of the State Advisory Council who recommended reducing the list considerably. They also recommended that the evaluation focus only on areas which were important for advisory committees to evaluate and which were not already being evaluated through other means. A shorter list of 15 major evaluation questions were developed. (See Figure 1) The importance and difficulty of answering these evaluation questions were rated by 83 State and Regional Advisory Committee Members and Vocational Educators at their joint meeting held in Lexington, Kentucky on October 23, 1975. The three areas selected as most important to evaluate were:

Figure 1

Importance and Difficulty for Advisory Committees to Evaluate Fifteen Aspects of Kentucky's Vocational Programs



The importance and difficulty of evaluating these fifteen aspects of Kentucky's Vocational Programs were rated by 83 State and Regional Advisory Committee Members and Educators at a joint meeting held in Lexington, Kentucky on October 23, 1975.

a. Relevance of Content. Does the content being taught in vocational courses reflect current practices and trends in industry?

b. Job Entry Skills. Do students leave the training program with the entry level occupational skills to perform the job for which they were trained?

c. Employability of Students. Are students able to find jobs in the skill area for which they were trained after leaving school?

Develop Preliminary Instruments and Guides for Using Them

Draft instruments and guides for evaluating the three areas selected as most important were develcped.

Review and Revise the Preliminary Materials

After the draft materials were developed, a day was spent with Mr. Billy Howard and Mr. Raymond Fulton to receive their feedback and advice for improving the material. Using their suggestions, the materials were revised and more fully developed.

Try Out the Instruments and Guides in Two Regions in Kentucky

Madisonville in Region II and Covington in Region VII were selected as the two sites for pilot testing the preliminary instruments and guides. Three visits were made to each site. On the first visit, regional advisory committee members were introduced to the evaluation instruments and guides in a three hour session. Members reacted to the materials and gave suggestions for improving them. The suggestions of the regional advisory committees were used to further refine the materials.

At the second meeting, five craft committees in each region were introduced to the system and prepared to test the materials during a one month trial run. The vocational programs participating from Madisonville were:

Distributive Education - Trigg County High School

Health Careers - Madisonville Health Occupations Annex

Auto Mechanics - Christian County Vocational School

Auto Mechanics - Madisonville Area Vocational School

Nursing - Muhlenburg County Vocational School

The vocational programs participating from Covington were:

Practical Nursing
Auto Mechanics
Business and Office
Child Care
} - Northern Kentucky State Vocational Technical School

Agribusiness - Lloyd Memorial High School

A third meeting was held to review the results of the pilot test of the evaluation system. All ten craft committees successfully completed the evaluation process. Each committee had conducted interviews with students, graduates, employers, and vocational teachers; prepared recommendations and commendations for the vocational program; and listed the major needs for improvement of the vocational education program.

Feedback concerning the major strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation system as well as practical suggestions for making the process easier, less time consuming and more useful were sought from the craft committee members and vocational educators involved in the pilot test. A summary of participants' commendations and recommendations are listed below.

Some of the strengths of the materials mentioned by participants were:

a. Involvement of employers, students, and craft committees in the evaluation of vocational programs

b. Opening of communication between educators and business and industry

c. Self-explanatory and easy to follow

d. Good coverage of the essential areas that need to be evaluated by advisory committees

e. The evaluation profile is easy to work with

f. Both quantitative and subjective evaluation data is collected

g. No one group of people (students, graduates, teachers, employers) control of the formulation of opinion

h. Does not require Ph.D. to decipher

i. Interviews questions are relevant

j. Variety of responses are available to those being interviewed

k. Interview questions are written in such a way that the person could respond honestly without feeling defensive

Some of the weaknesses of the materials mentioned by participants were:

a. Too much paper to handle

b. Some interview questions are not pertinent to all the vocational programs (e.g., employability questions for home economics program)

c. Insufficient time for doing a good job

d. Too many questions, many are redundart, too wordy

e. Lack of coordination between the vocational school administration and the committee members

f. Lack of a clear and detailed explanation for completing the two evaluation forms

g. Difficult to conduct interviews on own time, especially difficult to interview other employers

h. Some of the questions are hard to understand

Prepare Final Instruments and Guide

The results of the pilot test were used to prepare the final version of the Kentucky Advisory Committee Evaluation System. On preparing the final version, an effort was made to retain what participants felt were the strengths of the materials while improving the weaknesses.

Conclusions and Recommendations of the Project

Kentucky Advisory Committee members in Regions II and VII responded very positively to the evaluation system. As a group, the advisory and craft committees felt that the Kentucky Advisory Committee Evaluation System was a helpful and practical way to involve advisory committees in program evaluation. The craft committees who participated in the pilot test recommended that KACES be adopted for use by advisory committees throughout Kentucky.

Recommendations to be considered when implementing KACES statewide are listed below.

1. The role of the vocational teacher in the evaluation process should be clearly defined. Several craft committees mentioned that the teacher should serve as a resource but not involved in interviews or completing the evaluation forms.

2. Since most craft committees have jobs that are difficult to leave during work hours, scheduling time for interviews may be sometimes difficult. Alternative procedures, such as telephone interviews, should be used when necessary.

3. Advisory committees should be encouraged to provide constructive critical feedback and not to just praise the vocational program.

4. Teachers must be assured that this is not a personnel evaluation. They should be informed how the information will be used.

5. Although detailed guides have been developed to explain the evaluation procedures, orientation sessions are a necessity in at least the first year. Small group sessions throughout the state are needed to clarify the process and to generate enthusiasm.

6. When the system is implemented, advisory committees should be reminded that evaluation is only part of their job. Other functions of the advisory committees should be reemphasized so that they will not fall by the wayside.

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